DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 113 768 CS 501 137

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TITLE Simulation Learning Experiences in Speech Communication.
PUB DATE Apr 75
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association Convention (Chicago, Illinois, April 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; *Communication (Thought Transfer); Educational Research; *Games; Higher Education; Instructional Materials; *Learning Activities; *National Surveys; *Simulation; Speech Instruction; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This study, the first national survey of an academic discipline's use of simulation and game exercises, constitutes an attempt to determine the status, rationale, and effectiveness of such exercises. Specifically, members of the Speech Communication Association were surveyed regarding the courses in which simulations and games are employed, the types of exercises used, communication concepts demonstrated, selection criteria, evaluation techniques, and attitudes toward the utilization of communication games. Data were collected by means of a 17-item questionnaire. The responses indicated that the utilization of communication games is a popular teaching strategy within the discipline. With more than 70 percent of the respondents indicating utilization of communication games, the recent trend of including games in fundamentals, interpersonal communication, and small group textbooks, and the advent of a dozen or so books within the past year which include as their major emphasis "communication probes" or "communication vibrations" appear warranted. The results of the study are presented in both narrative and table format. (RB)

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SIMULATION LEARNING EXPERIENCES IN SPEECH COMMUNICATION

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and
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The impress[illegible] the "age of relevancy" has forced teachers of speech to investigate alternative teaching strategies, as students and the general public demand academic accountability. Although the multidimensional factors believed related to effective instruction are difficult to isolate, several contemporary teaching strategies have emerged, many of which were unknown a mere decade ago. Among instructional innovations recently developed are simulation and game exercises.[1] Speech communication scholars with increased frequency are reporting the theoretical and pragmatic application of simulations and games in the classroom.[2] Current textbooks and convention panels focus on games and simulations as exciting and effective means of teaching communication concepts and relationships.[3] The popular use of simulation and games exercises in fundamentals, interpersonal communication, and small group courses has, in some quarters, reached fad proportions.

Cognizant of the growing interest in simulation and game strategies among teachers, the researchers sought to investigate the extent to which these strategies are employed within the discipline of speech communication. This study, the first national survey of an academic discipline's use of simulation and game exercises, constituted an attempt to determine the status, rationale, and effectiveness of these strategies. Specifically members of the Speech Communication Association were surveyed regarding courses in which simulations and games are employed, the types of exercises used, communication concepts demonstrated, selection criteria, evaluation techniques, and attitudes toward the utilization of communication games (student attitudes, colleague attitudes, and personal attitudes). For the purpose of this study "simulations and games" were defined as "serious games in the sense that these games have an explicit and carefully thought-out educational purpose and are not intended to be played primarily for amusement."[4] While several educational researchers distinguish between "simulation" and"game" others view the terms as pedagogically synonymous.[5] We employed the terms interchangeably.

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Procedure

Data were collected by means of a seventeen item questionnaire. The mechanics of questionnaire construction (size, format, paper color, signature, sponsor agency, credibility and purpose explanation) and response rate (follow-up, reward, mailer, selection of subjects) were carefully considered in order to maximize replies and subject comprehension of the items.[6] Fourteen of the items were answerable by categorical replies, while three open-ended questions were included.

Subjects for the investigation consisted of randomly selected Speech Communication Association members listed in the 1973-1974 Directory. Excluding graduate teaching assistants and nonteachers from the sample base, a total of 1,604 subjects were selected. A single-page (8½" x 14") questionnaire, folded into booklet form, was mailed to each subject. In addition to the questionnaire, each subject received a letter of introduction and a postage guaranteed business reply envelope. The initial mailing occurred on May 6, 1974, with a follow-up mailout to non-responders on September 1, 1974. Five hundred and eleven usable replies were received (eighteen replies were classified as unusable). The return rate, 31.9% is comparable with other survey studies of randomly selected individuals in Speech Communication research reports.

Results

In an effort to render the answers to questionnaire items more meaningful to the reader, the researchers have demographically identified the survey respondents according to sex, academic rank, years of experience, academic degree, teaching level, and principal teaching field (see first two columns of Table 1). Male respondents outnumbered female respondents by a three to one margin. Predominantly college and university teachers, the respondents were relatively evenly divided among the major academic ranks. Approximately one half of all the respondents indicated fewer than ten years of teaching experience, while the remainder were divided almost equally among the 11-15, 16-20, and 20+ years of experience categories. By far the majority of all respondents held Ph.D. degrees, with Ph.D. respondents outnumbering M.A. respondents by a margin of well over two to one. Most of the respondents listed their principal teaching area as either speech fundamentals, interpersonal communication, rhetoric and public address, or communication theory. Other teaching areas accounted for a combined total of only ninety-one of the five hundred and eleven respondents.

Who utilizes communication games? Of the five hundred and eleven respondents, three hundred and sixty-one indicated that they utilized communication games in the classroom (70.6%),

while one hundred and fifty respondents (29.4%) reported no use of such simulations. When cross tabulated with sex, rank, experience, degree, teaching level, and teaching field, the three hundred and sixty-one game users are further identified in the last three columns of Table 1. With 70.1% of the male respondents and 72.6% of the female respondents indicating use of simulations, one must conclude that such strategies enjoy popularity with both sexes among SCA members. It is interesting to note that game utilization decreases as academic rank increases. While 82.1% of the instructors indicated use of communication games, only 55.1% of the full professors responded in the affirmative. Since academic rank generally correlates positively with years of experience, it is not surprising that game utilization decreases as years of experience increase. Beginning with 82.4% of teachers with 1-5 years of teaching experience, the percentage of game users declines with each five year category, finally revealing only 56.6% of the teachers with more than twenty years of experience responding as game users. Although a slightly higher percentage of M.A. degree holders indicated use of communication games (75.9%), more than two-thirds of the Ph.D. holders responding (69%) indicated use of games. As teaching level increases, game usage decreases, from high school to university situations. However, the low number of respondents from community colleges, high schools, and junior high schools requires very tentative acceptance of such a conclusion. Of the teaching fields represented by at least seventy-five respondents, games appear most popular among teachers of interpersonal communication and speech fundamentals, and least popular among rhetoric and public address instructors. The fact that 81.3% of the interpersonal communication instructors and 73.8% of the speech fundamentals instructors employ games attests to the significance of communication games in the speech communication discipline, inasmuch as these courses have traditionally been the highest enrollment courses within departmental curricula.

Which types of games are utilized? The three hundred and sixty-one game users were requested to indicate the types of games utilized most frequently. As Table 2 indicates, "reality-simulation" and "awareness training" games are utilized by considerably more SCA members than are "games of chance," "fantasy games," and "games of skill." The overwhelming choice of "reality-simulation" and "awareness training" games from a list of close-ended alternatives was underscored by comments in response to an open-ended questionnaire item pertaining to the major contribution of simulation exercises. Respondents' answers focused on the value of simulations as "opportunities to make mistakes without having to pay the price," as "providing students a chance to experience what they read in the textbook," and finally as "a chance to extend learning into the affective domain."

How long have SCA members utilized games? The survey results indicate utilization of communication games within the

Speech Communication discipline is a phenomenon of rather recent origin (see Table 3). Two hundred and ninety-six (82%) of all SCA game users responding indicated that they have used game strategies for fewer than seven years. At the same time that we emphasize the newness of game phenomena for most Speech Communication Association members, however, the fact that twenty-four respondents indicated familiarity with simulation and game techniques for thirteen or more years suggests that many of our current games were available for quite some time before they became widely accepted teaching methodologies.

In which courses are communication games used most frequently? The respondents were asked to list all courses in which communication games were utilized. Tabulations of their responses are reported in Table 4. Speech Fundamentals, Interpersonal Communication, and Small Group Communication were listed most frequently as courses best suited for game strategies. Again, it is interesting to note that "service courses" ranked highest in game utilization.

Why do instructors use communication games? On a close-ended, eight-choice item, respondents were requested to check all of the rationale factors which they considered as significant justifications for the use of communication games. Table 5 indicates the results of their choices. The primary justification for the use of games appears to lie in their experiential nature. Almost eighty-six percent of the respondents indicated that they view games as a "superior method of clarifying concepts." Open-ended responses on another questionnaire item echo this rationale. One respondent commented that "an ounce of experience is worth a ton of talk." Others praised game experiences as "learning to do by doing." Nearly eighty percent of the respondents suggested that a major value of game experiences rests in the "variety" which they bring into the speech classroom, while fifty-six percent of the game users saw "student enjoyment" as a reason for continued utilization of simulation exercises. Approximately one-half of the game users viewed communication games as "ice-breakers" and "rapport-builders." Fortunately, only thirty respondents considered "time-filling" an adequate justification for the utilization of communication games.

Which criteria are considered in selecting a particular communication game? Respondents were offered a list of twelve criteria and instructed to check the choices which they deemed essential for a particular game. As indicated on Table 6, respondents felt that "high interest level," "clear object lesson," "participation factors," "theory based " "teaching tool," and "life-like" constitute the most important criteria for selection of a communication game. It is interesting to note that only eighty-one respondents considered "specified time limit" a significant criteria. When asked on an open-ended item to discuss the

major problem associated with the use of communication games, a majority of respondents indicated the time required as the most significant deterrent.

How do instructors evaluate students' participation in communication games? Evaluation of student performance in simulation exercises has been recognized by authors of recent articles and textbooks as a difficult task for most instructors. SCA members were requested to answer items relative to evaluation of students' performance in communication games. The first item focused on the general method utilized (see Table 7), while the second item required specific methodologies employed in the evaluation process (see Table 8). Thus far, it would appear that peer evaluation, student self evaluation, and instructor evaluation are used considerably more frequently in complementary combinations than they are used in isolation. It is significant that one-third of all game users seem to have given up on the idea of formal evaluations of communication games. One hundred and twenty-seven respondents indicated "no formal evaluation" of classroom simulations. By far the most popular method of evaluation (whether by students or instructors) is the "observation" method. Two hundred and thirty-seven respondents indicated that "visible behavior changes" were observed as the basis of their evaluations of performance (see Table 8). Student diaries and other methods of self reporting (including face-to-face interviews with students following participation) are advocated by approximately one-third of the respondents.

Where do instructors obtain their communication games? The most popular source of communication games currently used by SCA members is a colleague (see Table 9). Two hundred and fifty-six game users indicated colleagues as a major source of the games which they utilize. Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that a number of their classroom simulations were the products of their own imaginations, while sixty-one percent of the game users singled out books as a good source. Teacher's manuals, articles, and commercially prepared games were cited with relatively equal frequency as sources of games, while SCA publications were utilized by only 9.4% of the respondents.

Which communication concepts are currently being taught through communication games? Respondents were asked on an open-ended item to provide the concept or concepts which they felt were particularly suited for instruction through game methodologies. Table 10 indicates concepts which were listed by at least ten respondents. Concepts listed by fewer than ten respondents are included in "other concepts" at the bottom of the table. Major concepts currently being taught through game experiences include non-verbal communication, trust, feedback,

person perception, listening, self awareness, group roles, communication barriers, problem solving, one way - two way communication, and conflict and conflict resolution.

How do instructors perceive reactions to their use of communication games? Three five-point Likert-type scales were included in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to indicate their own reactions to the use of communication games, as well as to indicate their perceptions of colleague and student reactions. Table 11 includes the breakdown of student reactions, colleague reactions, and personal reactions. Overall, respondents perceived student reactions to the use of communication games as more favorable than their own reactions or their colleagues' reactions. On a five-point scale, with five representing the most favorable evaluation, the means for the three groups are: Student Reactions (4.32), Personal Reactions (4.29), and Colleague Reactions (3.72). An examination of the distribution of responses across the five choices will reveal that student reactions and personal reactions were divided rather evenly between "very favorable" and "favorable" responses, while colleague reactions were perceived for the most part as "favorable" or "mixed."

Discussion

The responses obtained from five hundred and eleven Speech Communication Association members clearly indicate that the utilization of communication games is a popular teaching strategy within the discipline. With more than 70% of the respondents indicating utilization of communication games, the recent trend of including games in fundamentals, interpersonal, and small groups textbooks; and the advent of a dozen or so books within the past year which include as their major emphasis "communication probes" or "communication vibrations" appear warranted.

The finding that use of communication games decreases as academic rank increases and as years of experience increases probably means nothing more than an indication of the recency of the popularization of game utilization within the discipline. One additional explanation might rest in the kinds of courses taught by "full professors" and people with fifteen or more years of experience. Indeed it is possible that such people are assigned upper division and graduate courses which do not require the utilization of simulations and games. Certainly, a correlation must be drawn between the popularity of communication games in undergraduate "service courses" such as speech fundamentals and interpersonal communication and years of teaching experience. Teachers with fewer years of experience are most likely to be heavily involved in the teaching of undergraduate service courses, and, most teachers faced with the prospect of

three or more sections of a basic speech course would indeed be open to alternative teaching strategies which just might facilitate learning in courses packed with required enrollments.

Responses on the attitude scales would indicate that SCA members are generally pleased with the results of game utilization in their classrooms. There does, however, appear to be concern among game users that their colleagues may be less enthusiastic about their use of communication games. Responses to an open-ended item pertaining to major problems experienced in the utilization of communication games included a large number of comments concerning misunderstanding on the part of colleagues. When one considers that respondents indicated colleagues as the prime source of their communication games, some explanation of the apparent discrepancy would seem desirable. It is of course possible that the colleagues from which the games were obtained constituted a minority. On the other hand, it has been our experience that instructors most familiar with communication games are fully cognizant of inherent problems involved in conducting simulations. Willingness to openly discuss negative aspects of game utilization could be interpreted by relatively new game users as an overall unfavorable attitude toward games as a teaching strategy.

FOOTNOTES

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[3]Charles T. Brown and Charles Van Riper, Communication in Human Relationships (Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Co., 1973); Margret L. Clark, Ella A. Erway, and Lee Beltzer, The Learning Encounter: The Classroom as a Communications Workshop (New York: Random House, 1971); Keith V. Erickson, Dimensions of Oral Communication Instruction: Readings in Speech Education (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co. Publishers, 1970); George M. Gazda, et al., Human Relations Development: A Manual for Educators (Boston, Mass.: Allyn & Bacon, 1973); Kathleen M. Galvin and Cassandra L. Book, Speech Communication: An Interpersonal Approach for Teachers (Skokie, Illinois: National Textbook Co., 1972); Kathleen M. Galvin and Cassandra L. Book, Person to Person: An Introduction to Speech Communication (Skokie, Ill.: National Textbook Co. 1973); Kenneth G. Johnson, et al., Nothing Never Happens (Riverside, N. J.: Glencoe Press, 1974); John E. Jones and J. William Pfeiffer, Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators (Iowa City: University Associates, 1974); Gail E. Meyers and Michele Myers, The Dynamics of Human Communication: A Laboratory Approach (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1973); Thomas M. Scheidel, Speech Communication and Human Interaction (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman Co., 1972).

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TABLE 1

CATEGORIZATION OF RESPONDENTS AND THEIR USE OF COMMUNICATION GAMES

Variable	Number of Respondents	% of Total Respondents	Number Using Games	% of Variable	% of All Game Users
SEX					
Males	394	77.1%	276	70.1%	76.5%
Females	117	22.9%	85	72.6%	23.5%
ACADEMIC RANK					
Assistant Professor	171	33.5%	127	74.3%	35.2%
Associate Professor	118	23.1%	86	72.9%	23.8%
Full Professor	118	23.1%	65	55.1%	18.0%
Instructor	93	18.2%	78	82.1%	21.6%
Other	11	2.2%	5	45.5%	1.4%
YEARS OF EXPERIENCE					
1-5 years	108	21.1%	89	82.4%	24.7%
6-10 years	140	27.4%	110	78.6%	30.5%
11-15 years	85	16.6%	55	64.7%	15.2%
16-20 years	95	18.6%	60	63.2%	16.6%
More than 20	83	16.2%	47	56.6%	13.0%

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Variable	Number of Respondents	% of Total Respondents	Number Using Games	% of Variable	% of All Game Users
ACADEMIC DEGREE					
Ph.D.	316	61.8%	218	69.0%	60.4%
M.A.	141	27.6%	107	75.9%	29.6%
Ed.D.	20	3.9%	15	75.0%	4.2%
B.A.	9	1.8%	8	88.9%	2.2%
Other	25	4.9%	13	54.2%	3.6%
TEACHING LEVEL					
University	305	59.7%	212	69.5%	58.7%
College	112	21.9%	78	69.6%	21.6%
Community College	45	8.8%	35	77.8%	9.7%
High School	36	7.0%	30	83.3%	8.3%
Jr. High	13	2.5%	6	46.2%	1.7%
PRINCIPAL TEACHING FIELD					
Speech Fundamentals	160	31.3%	118	73.8%	32.7%
Interpersonal Communication	96	18.8%	78	81.3%	21.6%
Rhetoric and Public Address	89	17.4%	41	46.1%	11.4%

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Variable	Number of Respondents	% of Total Respondents	Number Using Games	% of Variable	% of All Game Users
PRINCIPAL TEACHING FIELD (CON.)					
Communication Theory	75	14.7%	54	72.0%	15.0%
Speech Education	31	6.1%	27	87.1%	7.5%
Small Groups	20	3.9%	17	85.0%	4.7%
Oral Interpretation	16	3.1%	7	43.8%	1.9%
Theatre	12	2.3%	9	75.0%	2.5%
Organizational Communication	6	1.2%	6	100.0%	1.7%
Debate	6	1.2%	4	66.7%	1.1%

TABLE 2

TYPES OF GAMES UTILIZED

Game Type	Number of Respondents Indicating Use	% of All Game Users
Reality-Simulation	293	81.2%
Awareness Training	247	68.5%
Games of Skill	80	22.2%
Fantasy Games	58	16.1%
Games of Chance	26	7.2%

TABLE 3

NUMBER OF YEARS GAMES UTILIZED

Years	Number of Times Indicated	% of All Game Users
1-3 Years	149	41.3%
4-7 Years	147	40.7%
8-12 Years	41	11.4%
13-20 Years	16	4.4%
21 or More Years	8	2.2%

TABLE 4

COURSES IN WHICH COMMUNICATION GAMES ARE

USED MOST FREQUENTLY

Course	Number of Respondents Indicating Use	% of All Game Users
Speech Fundamentals	161	44.6%
Interpersonal Communication	129	35.7%
Small Groups	93	25.8%
Communication Theory	49	13.6%
Speech Education	25	6.9%
Debate	17	4.7%
Theatre	16	4.4%
Oral Interpretation	15	4.2%
Rhetoric and Public Address	11	3.0%
Speech Pathology	6	1.7%
Other Courses	104	28.8%

TABLE 5

RATIONALE FOR THE USE OF COMMUNICATION GAMES

Rationale	Number of Times Indicated	% of All Game Users
Superior Method of Clarifying Concepts	309	85.6%
Variety; Alternative Teaching Strategy	288	79.8%
Student Enjoyment; Entertainment Value	202	56.0%
Good Ice-Breakers	195	54.0%
Rapport Builders	172	47.6%
Builds My Image As A Creative Teacher	62	17.2%
Time Fillers	30	8.3%
Other Rationales	85	23.5%

TABLE 6

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF SPECIFIC

COMMUNICATION GAMES

Criteria	Number of Times Indicated	% of all Game Users
High Interest Level	265	73.4%
Clear Object Lesson	258	71.5%
Participation Factors	257	71.2%
Theory Based	206	57.1%
Teaching Tool	204	56.5%
Life-Like	174	48.2%
Originality	113	31.3%
Modeling Features	97	26.9%
Specified Time Limit	81	22.4%
Simplicity	77	21.3%
Competitiveness	31	8.6%
Other Criteria	11	3.0%

TABLE 7

METHOD USED TO EVALUATE STUDENTS' PARTICIPATION

IN COMMUNICATION GAMES

Method	Number of Respondents Indicating Use	% of All Game Users
Combination of Instructor, Peer, & Self Evaluations	179	49.6%
No Formal Evaluation	127	35.2%
Instructor Evaluation Only	55	15.2%
Self Evaluation Only	31	8.6%
Peer Evaluation Only	30	8.3%

TABLE 8

MEASUREMENT METHODS FOR EVALUATION OF

COMMUNICATION GAMES

Measurement Method	Number of Respondents Indicating Use	% of All Game Users
Observation; Visible Behavior Changes	237	65.7%
Student Diaries: Self-Reporting	147	40.7%
Interviews with Students	118	32.7%
Skill Performance Criteria	109	30.2%
Paper-Pencil Tests	80	22.2%
Other Methods	53	14.7%

TABLE 9

SOURCES FROM WHICH COMMUNICATION GAMES ARE OBTAINED

Source	Number of Times Indicated	% of All Game Users
Colleagues	256	70.9%
Own Imagination	239	66.2%
Books	220	60.9%
Teacher's Manuals	116	32.1%
Articles	106	29.4%
Commercially Prepared Games	99	27.4%
SCA Publications	34	9.4%
Other Sources	34	9.4%

TABLE 10

COMMUNICATION CONCEPTS TAUGHT THROUGH GAMES

Concept	Number of Times Indicated
Non-Verbal Communication	68
Trust	52
Feedback	50
Person Perception	48
Listening	43
Self Awareness	35
Group Roles	35
Communication Barriers	33
Problem Solving	28
One Way - Two Way Communication	27
Conflict and Conflict Resolution	24
Other Concepts (49 Separate Items)	217

TABLE 11

EVALUATIONS OF REACTIONS TO THE USE OF COMMUNICATION GAMES

Reactions Evaluated	Very Favorable	Favorable	Mixed	Unfavorable	Very Unfavorable
Student Reactions	160 (44.3%)	160 (44.3%)	38 (10.5%)	3 (00.8%)	0 (00.0%)
Colleague Reactions	66 (18.3%)	140 (38.8%)	144 (39.9%)	10 (02.8%)	1 (00.3%)
Personal Reactions	151 (41.8%)	168 (46.5%)	40 (11.1%)	2 (00.6%)	0 (00.0%)